

Nadler Amendment Will Increase Funding for Housing for Persons with Aids

Thursday, 24 July 2003

Washington, D.C. - Congressman Jerrold Nadler (D-NY) today successfully offered an amendment to the Veterans Affairs/Housing and Urban Development appropriations bill for Fiscal Year 2004 that would increase funding for Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA).

"I am pleased that my colleagues in the House recognized the importance of this amendment. At any given time, one-third to one-half of all Americans living with AIDS are either homeless or in imminent danger of losing their homes. Without assistance, they face almost certain death on the streets. Through a variety of services, HOPWA helps thousands of people each year create a stable living environment for themselves," stated Nadler.

Nadler's amendment will bring the total for HOPWA to \$295 million, a \$5 million increase. HOPWA is a locally-controlled program that helps communities address local housing needs for persons living with AIDS.

In 2002, HOPWA funds served over 60,000 people in 74 cities and 34 states. Nadler's amendment would provide additional dollars to help those who are currently awaiting HOPWA-funded housing.

Nadler's floor statement on the amendment is as follows:

Mr. Chairman, this amendment would increase the appropriation for the Housing Opportunities for Persons With AIDS, or HOPWA, program by \$5 million. This is a far cry from what is truly needed for this valuable program, but it represents an important first step toward full funding.

I would like to thank Mr. Shays and Mr. Crowley for joining me on this amendment and demonstrating the bipartisan support this program enjoys.

Mr. Chairman, at any given time, one-third to one-half of all Americans living with AIDS are either homeless or in imminent danger of losing their homes. Without assistance, they face almost certain death on the streets.

This is where HOPWA comes in. Through a variety of services, HOPWA helps thousands of people each year put a roof above their head and create a stable living environment for themselves.

But HOPWA is not just about being compassionate, it's also good public policy. Having stable, decent housing is the key to maintaining strict treatment regimens which have allowed thousands of people to resume their normal, productive lives.

HOPWA is a locally controlled program that provides communities with the flexibility to address local housing needs. It also supplies a low-cost alternative to acute-care hospital beds, typically paid for with Medicaid dollars, which are often the only available shelter for people living with AIDS. In fact, whereas an acute-care facility would cost, on average over \$1,000 a day under Medicaid, assistance under HOPWA averages just \$55 to \$110 a day.

In Fiscal Year 2002 alone, HOPWA funds served over 60,000 people in 74 cities and 34 states across the nation. This is a well-run, far-reaching and successful program.

When I meet with members of the AIDS community, there is one need that is stressed above all others, and that is housing. Finding affordable housing can be extremely difficult as it is. Throw in the added complications of living with AIDS -- paying for expensive medication, the difficulty in holding a steady job, and even facing discrimination -- and it's nearly impossible. That's why HOPWA fills such a critical void.

But without sufficient funding, thousands of people will continue to be unable to access these critical services. In San Francisco, for example, over 4,700 people await assistance from HOPWA-funded housing. We must do all we can to reduce this backlog.

The housing crisis facing people living with HIV/AIDS exacts an enormous toll on individuals, their families, and communities across the country. HOPWA dollars help lessen this toll. Without proper funding for HOPWA, people with HIV and AIDS will continue to die prematurely in hospital rooms, shelters, and on the streets of our cities. This amendment is a drop in the bucket toward what is truly necessary, but even this modest increase will mean the difference between life and death for thousands of people. I urge the adoption of this amendment.

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